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Editor, DWIGHT L. WILBUR, M.D.

Assistant to the Editor, ROBERT F. EDWARDS

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EDITORIAL

For Freedom in Medical Education

When the American Medical Association announced in December that it was contributing \$500,000 to a fund to aid the country's medical schools, it planted an idea that appears to be taking root rapidly. Almost immediately other contributions began to roll in—unsolicited, voluntarily donated by those who believed sincerely in the cause of freedom of our medical schools.

Before formal plans for collection and allocation of funds for the medical schools were completed, various contributors were reported to have assembled close to \$100,000 to add to the initial half million by the A.M.A. Board of Trustees. As an aid to the fund, and as representative of complete support of the idea, the Council of the California Medical Association has voted to contribute \$100,000 to this worthy movement. Five of the nation's medical schools are in California. Other state medical associations are understood to be considering appropriations of their own, in line with their financial resources.

Right now the formal machinery for gathering and allocating these funds is in operation. There has been formed an Illinois non-profit corporation known as the American Medical Education Foundation, whose sole purpose will be to aid medical education through supplying necessary funds to needy schools. Sparked by a board of directors representing the highest officials of the American Medical Association in its policy-making, administrative and scientific branches, this foundation is dedicated to "provide unrestricted funds for the use of medical schools in the training of future physicians."

As was pointed out in the January issue of CALIFORNIA MEDICINE, the word "unrestricted" is the key

to the entire movement of voluntary contributions to the medical schools. The Federal Government cannot use that word if it contributes tax funds to these schools; under its political and legal inhibitions, it would be bound in part at least to take over the management of the schools, in their curricula, teaching methods, personnel and even students. What rules and regulations would be built up under the existing governmental system of law by regulation rather than by statute, one can only imagine; if the operation of some other Government departments is a criterion, the regulation of medical schools would be carried out in such a way as to capture the institutions as bases for a push for state medicine.

The American Medical Education Foundation offers an opportunity for the physicians of the country to support their own schools and obviate the need for federal funds. Many questions as to details of the fund remain to be answered. However, there is sufficient brain-power on the board of directors to bring forth sound answers to these questions. Given a little time, this board will surely arrive at satisfactory policies to aid our medical schools and to satisfy the desires of those who contribute the funds.

At present the Foundation is aiming at annual contributions of \$100 each from the practicing physicians of the country. It is intended to establish local or county committees to supervise and encourage such contributions, which will then be added to the general fund for distribution in an equitable manner. The Foundation is seeking an opinion as to the tax-deduction status of such contributions. While this question has not yet been answered, it is

reasonable to assume that the chances are good that such contributions will be considered deductible; after all, contributions to the parent universities are, by and large, tax-deductible. Regardless of this question, however, the need for immediate action by the medical profession is obvious. The schools need money now, and they will continue to need it from year to year while current economic conditions obtain.

All who have received it recognize that the cost of medical education is considerably greater than the amount students are required to pay for it. Each graduate physician therefore is beholden to the source of the funds, public or private, which make up the deficit. In discharging that obligation, physicians who may elect either to make tax-free unrestricted contribution to medical schools or to

pay a considerable share of taxes to provide fettering government subsidies, will have little difficulty in making a choice.

Almost any physician who gives thought to the matter will readily recognize that a moderate contribution to this cause is in his own as well as in his profession's best interest. And the best time to contribute to this cause is now. Contributions now by physicians who think clearly and act promptly will not only help the fund but will serve as a stimulus for others. Details and forwarding forms are printed each week in the front pages of the *Journal* of the American Medical Association. They are there at hand for alert, quick-to-act physicians who wish to protect their profession as a scientific body, free of political domination and eager to advance along scientific lines.

